Medicine in the Media

July 13–16, 2011
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

Wednesday, July 13

5:00 – 9:00 p.m.	**Welcome Reception and Dinner** *Hanover Inn – Daniel Webster Room*
6:00 p.m.	**Opening Remarks and Introductions**
7:00 p.m.	**Special Guest Speaker** ***Deborah Cohen***, assistant editor at *BMJ*, will kick off the course by discussing her recent investigative work examining the European medical device regulatory system.

Thursday, July 14

7:30 a.m.	**Continental Breakfast** *Hanover Inn – Daniel Webster Room, available at 6:45 am*
8:00 – 9:30 a.m. *Silsby 028*	**Orientation and a big picture look at medicine in the media** This session will review the goals of the course, outline some common problems researchers see when they read stories about health in the media, and discuss ways to do better.
9:30 – 10:30 a.m. *Silsby 028*	**How big? Numbers in research** A major challenge for health journalists is to understand how big the main effect is in a given study. This session describes how health outcomes are counted and compared. The session also will provide a quick review of some basic terms used in health research and statistics. ***Steven Woloshin***
10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	**Break**
10:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. *Silsby 028*	**How sure? Basic research designs** No matter how big the numbers are, you still need to decide whether to believe them or not. Perhaps the most basic question to ask is whether the numbers came from a true experiment. This session focuses on the basic distinction between randomized trials and observational studies. ***Lisa Schwartz***
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	**Lunch** *Haldeman-Kemeny Hall Courtyard*

Thursday, July 14 (continued)

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
Silsby 028

Using what you learned 1: Problems with numbers and some solutions
Understanding the numbers is one thing, but communicating them to your readers is another. This example-based, interactive session will highlight how numbers can be misleading (or just confusing) and offer practical guidance on how to report them clearly.
Steven Woloshin

3:45 – 5:00 p.m.
Locations to be announced

Concurrent Workshop Sessions (will be repeated Friday)
Choose from the following:
- *Using the Dartmouth Atlas – Hands-on tutorial*
- *Hunting down your own stats and background information*
- *Tutorial on course material so far*
- *Break*

5:15 – 6:15 p.m.
Silsby 028

What criteria do you use when covering research stories?
There are now six international "watchdog" website projects that evaluate health news coverage using the same basic criteria. In this session, you will hear from one of the people who started this international movement in Australia, ***David Henry***. With the U.S. perspective, HealthNewsReview.org publisher ***Gary Schwitzer*** will report on what they have seen after 5 years and 1,500 stories reviewed. The session also will touch on the roles and responsibilities of researchers, institutions, and organizations in making it easier for journalists to do their job. You will have a chance to review a story during the workshop.

7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

Dinner and Medicine in the Media alumni panel discussion
Dartmouth Outing Club
Graduates of the Medicine in the Media course reflect on their experiences (highlights and lowlights!) applying what they learned in the course.

Friday, July 15

7:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast
Hanover Inn – Daniel Webster Room

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.
Silsby 028

How sure? The limited role of statistics
P values and 95% confidence intervals can be intimidating, but these are the basic measures that researchers use to express the role of chance and the precision of their findings. Being comfortable with these statistics can help journalists judge for themselves the value of study findings. In this session, these concepts will be explained clearly and concisely.
Steven Woloshin

Friday, July 15 (continued)

9:00 – 10:15 a.m. _Silsby 028_	**Using what you learned 2: Highlighting cautions about observational studies** Because some exposures are harmful, much research cannot involve randomized trials and must rely on observational studies. A major problem with these studies is that they may be difficult or downright impossible to interpret correctly. This session will address the problem of confounding and how researchers typically deal with it. **_Lisa Schwartz and Natasha Singer_**
10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	**Break**
10:30 – 11:45 a.m. _Silsby 028_	**Using what you learned 3: More cautions (even for randomized trials)** Even with the best study designs, you need to understand basic study facts: what was measured, who participated in the study, and for how long. This session deals with the problems that arise in extrapolating from intermediate to clinical outcomes, from high-risk to lower risk patients, and from short- to long-term results. **_Lisa Schwartz and Steven Woloshin_**
11:45 a.m. – **12:30 p.m.**	**Lunch** _Haldeman-Kemeny Hall Courtyard_
12:30 – 1:45 p.m. _Silsby 028_	**Disease mongering** Healthcare providers and the public are under increasing pressure to accept expanded definitions of what constitutes disease. When this pressure does not serve patients' interests, it has been labeled disease mongering. The primary interest served is the financial well-being of pharmaceutical and device manufacturers who stand to gain from expanded markets. This session will explore how the media can unwittingly facilitate this process. **_David Henry_**
1:45 – 3:15 p.m. _Silsby 028_	**Busting through the broadcast blues** Broadcast reporters face special challenges because of the format and time limits of their medium. This session provides you a chance to learn from a couple of broadcast professionals who have succeeded in telling stories that evaluate the evidence—even within the constraints of TV news. **_Heather Won Tesoriero and Gary Schwitzer_**
3:15 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. _Locations to be announced_	**Outing or Workshop Sessions** Choose from the following options: • _Outing to Gile Mountain_ • _Using the Dartmouth Atlas – Hands-on tutorial_ • _Hunting down your own stats and background information_ • _Tutorial on course material so far_ • _Break_

Friday, July 15 (continued)

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	**Dinner and Guest Speaker** *Dartmouth Outing Club* **Paul M. Coates** will discuss the evolving evidence base for the use of dietary supplements to prevent disease and enhance health—what the research tells us, what it doesn't, and what we might expect in the future.

Saturday, July 16

7:30 a.m.	**Continental Breakfast** *Hanover Inn – Daniel Webster Room*
8:00 – 10:30 a.m. *Silsby 028*	**The logic of cancer screening** Early detection is the best protection, right? Prepare to have fundamental beliefs questioned. In this session, you'll learn to distinguish between strength of opinion and strength of evidence when it comes to cancer screening tests—perhaps one of the most misunderstood and hyped areas of medicine. **Barry Kramer**
10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	**Break**
10:45 a.m. – Noon *Silsby 028*	**Garbage! When the news may not be fit to print** The cautions about some study designs are formidable—so much so that journalists might reconsider covering them at all. This session will highlight stories that might have been best left on the cutting room floor—for example, preliminary results (e.g., scientific meetings, animal studies), uncontrolled studies, and cost-effectiveness models. **Steven Woloshin and Lisa Schwartz**
Noon – 12:45 p.m.	**Lunch** *Haldeman-Kemeny Hall Courtyard*
12:45 – 1:45 p.m. *Silsby 028*	**Guidance on guidelines: Using clinical recommendations in reporting** When covering a newly available screening test or treatment, it can be helpful to provide current clinical guidelines for context, but that may be easier said than done. Multiple organizations (professional medical societies, advocacy groups, government, and others) often produce conflicting recommendations. So what makes a guideline trustworthy and why? Using a case study to guide the discussion, this talk will provide simple tools to help evaluate the quality of a given guideline and how to sort through the disagreement. **Jennifer M. Croswell**
1:45 – 3:00 p.m. *Silsby 028*	**Using what you learned 4: You make the call!** Wrap up the course with some fast-paced practice in detecting statements that are exaggerated, overstated, or misleading. *Farewell!*